

Shrewsbury explains that, as for the peace recently offered to the Allies at Maestricht by Louis XIV, he was 'as much unacquainted with [it] as any gentleman that lives in the country, having never heard otherwise of it than as they may do in news letters/ ¹

Perhaps the most striking examples of William's? reluctance to admit his English ministers to any share in foreign policy occur in connection with the Partition Treaties.

The first was virtually concluded before William wrote to Somers, bidding him communicate it under a pledge of secrecy to Vernon and such others as he considered necessary.² There was no suggestion of consulting the Privy Council or the Cabinet, and the Whig leaders acquiesced in this secret diplomacy. When the first Partition Treaty was nullified by the death of the Electoral Prince of Bavaria, and it became necessary to arrange a second, Englishmen were similarly excluded from the negotiations, although on this occasion William did communicate the treaty itself to the Council 'in great secrecy'.³ This treaty was also useless because just before Charles II of Spain died he made a will in favour of the Duke of Anjou, and Louis accepted the Spanish crown for his grandson.

William was now in a most difficult position. In England, he told Heinsius,

it was no sooner said that the King of Spain's

³ Feb. 6-16, 1700. Ibid. p. 397.